

ACLE 2017 devotion for Day 2 – Planet / “Eco-Reformation”

Psalm 8

*“When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—
the moon and the stars you set in place—*

*⁴ what are mere mortals that you should think about them,
human beings that you should care for them?*

*⁵ Yet you made them only a little lower than God
and crowned them with glory and honour.*

*⁶ You gave them charge of everything you made,
putting all things under their authority.....*

These words are King David’s, expressing his faith in a loving creating God.

As Bishop David I have been asked to share with you “what my conviction is.”

I guess that means what I believe about you and me, the planet and the universe and where God is in it all..... and we can throw in an “eco-reformation” in Lutheran schools as well - in 5 minutes....

I can’t presume these days that every teacher in a Lutheran school believes in God, any more than Professor Flannery can assume that all of you believe in man-made climate change – although I would guess we might both have the numbers here today!

I am not a scientist. I failed year 10 science so I take their word for it and would want to believe their God given collective wisdom.

I am not an expert on God either. As a bishop I am still a child learning about God. My faith is a mixture of wonder, simple trust and many questions. I take his word about himself, the universe and my place in it, and I defer to his world-view over mine and all others.

So from my understanding of God’s word I share with you some of my convictions - what I believe whether climate change is man-made or not, whether the earth is flat or round, and whether or not one day bishops are replaced by robots - this is what I will still believe.

Firstly:

- I believe this this magnificent, mysterious universe and this mathematically impossible planet we live on together is not a complex cosmic accident, but a gift of a loving wise creator.
- I believe the children in front of you each day are more than “slime plus time”, but were lovingly woven together in their mother’s wombs, by the ultimate “Dream Weaver” who created human life in his own image to relate to him in a unique way even allowing us to reject him.
- I believe he purposefully crafted this environment we live in as a home for me and all the creatures he made and loves. I don’t know how he did that or how long it took him – science might help me with that.

- I believe God is into renewables and each day he replenishes and renews the world around me. His sun gets up on me and his rain falls whether I acknowledge him or not.
- I believe the Barrier Reef is worth more than the reported \$56b and so is every other living thing worth more than what someone wants for it or what it can produce. God's world simply "is" for him, and he made it for me. He says it is good and wants me to discover just that.
- I believe the world around me is not my right to exploit, but to explore, enjoy, live from and live in, and care for, for God.

So if I was to draw God, I would colour him in green - for life and growth and peace...

Secondly:

- While I believe God is green, I need to confess I am not as green as I like to think.
- I may have 14 solar panels on my roof and drive a hybrid Camry, walked 26km on Tuesday, ride a bike when I can, and I like to think I don't take up too much oxygen because I don't talk as much as some pastors...
- But I am about to get on board 12 aircraft while on R&R and undo all of that in one hit, unless I can count the trees that will be planted in my honour, or the elephant and monkey sanctuaries I intend visiting in Africa...
- I may look lightweight but I believe my footprints on this earth will always be too big and heavy.
- I believe pollution starts not from what we pump into the atmosphere together but as Jesus said it starts from within my own heart – selfishness, greed, materialism and self-righteousness. It only ends up polluting the planet. And I believe I live in denial about that much of the time.

So I believe an "eco-reformation" has to start not out there somewhere but inside me - with the "ego reformation" that Luther was literally banging on about. I have to face the fact that the world doesn't revolve around me and I am not the centre of the universe but that I live and die in relation to the one who made it all. No wonder the first of his 95 theses was about daily repentance and renewal – from the inside out, and so I believe an appropriate invitation to confess and be forgiven about our lives in the world before God is not out of place in Lutheran schools....

And Finally:

- I believe that in Jesus Christ God has effected the climate change that matters most – changing forever the atmosphere between me and God.
- I believe that because of him I now live in an environment of unconditional love, constant forgiveness, and eternal life - whatever happens to me, or in, and to the world around me.

- I believe that in Christ God is renewing me and restoring all the things I have broken and I am to be part of that renewing every day, and can look forward to seeing its completion at the end of time.
- I don't believe it is my task to save the planet because Christ has already done that. I don't believe in worshipping the planet but the one who made it and has saved it. I believe my task is to give witness to him in words and in the way I live in and towards the human and natural world around me.
- I do believe in caring for this earth and its atmosphere, in getting my hands dirty if necessary, beginning in my own backyard, just as Christ shed his sweat and blood on this earth in love for the world on the cross.
- I don't believe in caring for the world out of fear of what might happen if I don't, or out of guilt because of the mess I have left behind, but out of thankfulness and love for God and those around me and those who will come after me.

So whatever the truth about climate change, whether the earth is round or flat, or if bishops are one day replaced by robots – those things do but don't matter in a way, because these things will always be my conviction regardless - whatever the climate, every day. It's what I believe from God's word about him and his world and my place in it.

In the words of Sir John Jones yesterday, my simple faith may on the surface to some seem "*an inch wide*", but believe me it is "*a mile deep*" and makes the world of difference to everything I do in the world.

And if I were you, those are some convictions coming from our Christian faith that I would want the children in my care each day as a teacher in a Lutheran school to learn from God's word and from me about him, them and the world we live in, whether that's in a Christian studies or a science class, and I would trust and pray that it *would* make a difference.

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